BOOK MARK IT

Ruth Cox

Friends Ages 3-6

Cosmo and the robot. Brian Pinkney. HarperCollins, 2000. $15.95. 0-688-15940-0. Cosmo, a boy whose family lives on Mars, fixes his friend Rex the robot when Rex malfunctions and goes after his sister.

Jazzbo and Googy. Matt Novak. Hyperion, 2000. $14.99. 0-7868-0388-6. Googy makes lots of mistakes in his attempt to become friends with Jazzbo, whose best buddy is his teddy bear, until Googy proves to be a fun playmate too.

That's mine, Horace. Holly Keller. HarperCollins, 2000. $15.95. 0-688-17159-1. Horace plays sick after he lies about the truck he took from the playground until Walter, the real owner, sends him a note saying he can keep it until he feels better.

Wimberley worried. Kevin Henkes. HarperCollins, 2000. $15.89. 0-688-17027-7. Wemberly worries about everything, especially about going to school, until she meets Jewel and they have so much fun together they both forget to worry.

Will you be my friend? Nancy Tafuri. Scholastic, 2000. $15.95. 0-590-63782-7. Bird discovers what a good friend Bunny is when a storm gets his nest all wet and Bunny helps him build a new one.

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STRATEGY:

Guiding Principles

Alice H. Yucht

In 1931, S. R. Ranganathan published his *Five laws of library science*:

1. Books are for use.
2. Every reader his/her book.
3. Every book its reader.
4. Save the time of the reader.
5. The library is a growing organism.

Over the years, many writers have expounded on those basic precepts within the contexts of the different 'genres' of library services. If we consider the term "book" to cover all forms of "published knowledge," (e.g., print, digital, artistic, etc.) Ranganathan's Laws still effectively summarize what should be every school library's operating guidelines.

BOOKS ARE FOR USE. No school library can afford to be an archive of obsolete objects. If any part of your collection is gathering dust, you need to figure out why. Is that subject no longer part of the curriculum, or is what you do have now outdated and/or irrelevant? Too often we hear administrators or Board members say "You don't need more money for books; your shelves are already full." That kind of statement has to be the best impetus for constant weeding and collection maintenance — to ensure that what you *do* have is what your patrons need and can/will use. (Sometimes even the physical condition of the resource may be a problem: if it *looks* musty and dusty, most contemporary kids won't touch it!)

Availability, access, and ease of use are equally important; is your library 'open' as needed, so that readers have easy access to all your resources, or are your materials too often 'chained' with restrictions? Are your reference books really earning their keep, or are they languishing untouched, just because they cost so much? Do you have laserdisks, but no working laserdisk player? Does everyone in your building know how to access your subscription databases, or is that considered privileged/restricted information, available only within the walls of the library?

EVERY READER HIS/HER BOOK. Libraries should reflect the needs and interests of *all* their patrons, not just a select few. Does your collection have something for everyone? Do you provide a wide variety of ideas, interests, and formats, beyond what you personally prefer and/or believe in? Do you have materials for both the advanced *and* the remedial readers on all grade levels, for appeal to the different kinds of intelligences and learning styles? Do you know how/where to borrow or access additional materials as needed? Interlibrary loan is one of the best-kept secrets — and financial bargains — in the library world; use it to supplement your own collection (and impress your customers) at minimal cost.

EVERY BOOK ITS READER. Are your resources getting used, or do they need to be promoted? Several years ago, after a major weeding, I rearranged my library collection and noticed a marked increase in circulation. I increased the space between shelves, left more room at the end of each shelf, and put up lots of eye-catching subject markers. Materials that had been 'lost' on previously-

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packed shelves were now easier to find and display. Although I hadn't really made any major new purchases, many of my students thought they had discovered lots of 'new' resources!

Do you send out notices of new acquisitions to both faculty *and* students? Do you offer workshops/demos of new online resources to faculty, students *and* parents? Do you have a constantly changing shelf/display of new books (into which you occasionally sneak some older, but neglected, titles)? Do you e-mail teachers with hotlinks to new websites they might find useful? Go beyond booktalks and bulletin boards to make sure that every part of your collection is being used.

SAVE THE TIME OF THE READER. As the world of information grows, it's easy for students to become overwhelmed with an overabundance of resources, or a lack of knowledge about how to use what's available. Helping our students become effective and efficient information consumers is one of the most important functions of our job. In addition to teaching information literacy skills, we can also make the library an easier/friendlier place to use by eliminating arbitrary — and often artificial — barriers.

As librarians, we know how the physical collection is arranged, but our patrons don't always know, especially if they are not habitual library-users. Simple directional signs are a necessity in every library; not just call number shelf-markers but also subject/format/location identifications. Color-coded spine labels for different fiction genres help my students browse the fiction section for their favorite kinds of books, while artifacts on top of the shelving sections identify different subject areas. When I rearranged my book collection, I interfiled all the subject reference books with the 'regular' books. Only the general encyclopedias, almanacs, and dictionaries remain in a separate, centrally-located Reference section. Now students can find almost everything on a subject in one place...and instantly compare what's available and most useful for their purposes.

Instead of bookmarking frequently-used websites on each of the library's computers, I put up web pages with hotlinks to those URLs, as well as 'Project Pathfinders" with pre-selected quality resources for specific mass assignments. These online 'ready references' help students spend more time actively researching instead of aimlessly re-surfing their topics. And because access to these resources are now available wherever my students are (home or school), the old "but the library was closed" excuse no longer works!

THE LIBRARY IS A GROWING ORGANISM. Does your library still look exactly the way it did ten — or even five — years ago? New technologies, information formats and imaginative products, community structure and social conditions, even shifting grade levels all impact both the physical features and cognitive climate of the spaces we work in. Change is a constant for us, whether we like it or not. Choosing between print and electronic formats means a whole new set of budgeting guidelines. While teaching new online search strategies builds on the traditional research skills we've been teaching for years. Because we see kids grow and mature as they advance through the grades, we also get to see how their minds develop and interests change, and we've got to be ready to supply the resources to keep them learning...even if some of those new ideas didn't even exist ten years ago!

Ranganathan's laws may be seventy years old, but they're still worth keeping in mind as guiding principles for contemporary school library services.

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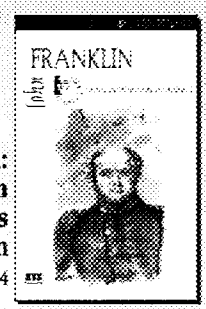

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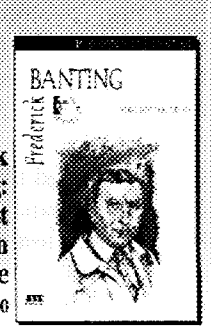

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